Discussion Minutes

D3 – Policy Coherence and Multi-Level Nexus Governance

Chair: Jens Newig

Speakers: Nicolas Jager, Christian Schleyer, Elena López-Gunn

Minutes: Christian Knieper

Questions and discussions after each presentation

Nicolas Jager – Assessing policy coherence in the Water-Energy-Food nexus: insights from a comparative case study in Lower Saxony, Germany, and Transylvania, Romania

- Audience: The 22 case studies mentioned in the presentation might not be enough.
- Nicolas Jager: The SCOPUS search includes many more than these 22 cases.

- Audience: Do you have a framework for data collection in the case studies?
- Nicolas Jager: A framework is useful for making case studies available to the public.

- Audience: How can we measure coherence in the nexus?
- Nicolas Jager: A generic framework allows a more integrated view on measuring coherence.

- Audience: How can we operationalize the main research question, i.e. effectiveness of resource governance regarding coherence?
- Nicolas Jager: This is an important aspect of research design. Indicators need to be developed to make case studies comparable.

Christian Schleyer – Integrating the ecosystem services concept in EU policy making: Conceptual challenges and empirical observations

- Audience: To what extent does inclusiveness have a value per se or is instrumental to participation?
- Christian Schleyer: Inclusiveness is important for both. Stakeholders may have knowledge on ecosystems, and inclusiveness helps identify trade-offs between ecosystem services. This facilitates negotiations about ecosystem services within the scope of policies.

- Audience: What is the role of indicators?
- Christian Schleyer: Indicators are needed for instance to describe ecosystem services. It is challenging to find suitable indicators. There is an ongoing debate about that. The choice of indicators also depends on data availability.

Elena López-Gunn – The water-energy-food nexus: Foresight for research and innovation in the context of climate change

- Audience: An international organization can be helpful. I disagree that a pure local approach is helpful. For example, with respect to water pollution, we need to think beyond Europe.

- Elena López-Gunn: I agree, but a local approach is still important.

- Audience: How can integration and coherence be realized? For example, what did you find out with regard to energy and water policy?
- Elena Lopez-Gunn: One insight is that political will and interest are important.

General discussion

Jens Newig structured the general discussion according to four overall questions.

How important actually is coherence?

Audience: Has the concept of coherence more an analytical purpose, as the nature of real-world governance is messy and contested?
Nicolas Jager: I agree. We should keep processes in mind, not just structure (organizations, regulations etc.). Coherence is an analytical tool that helps understand governance with some normative underlying layers.

Audience: Coherence is important, but what do you do in its absence?
Nicolas Jager: To what extent do water, energy, and food have to be aligned? Full integration need not be necessary and may be too rigid.

Audience: From a systems perspective, optimizing sub-systems independently at sub-system level causes problems at the overall level.
Audience: Coherence is a meaningful strategic concept.
Nicolas Jager: I agree. It is important to include externalities. It is a means to achieve effective governance.

How can coherence be produced?
Audience: Incentive structures are fundamentally important, also in policies
Elena López-Gunn: It is important to document policy learning. Systemic thinking is good. But politics is involved.
Christian Schleyer: It is important to keep participation and negotiation ongoing to mitigate incoherence. Sometimes, the policy frame at EU level needs to be changed.
Audience: A general set of principles that guide the WEF nexus would be a good point to start from.